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Bush shunning Nixon series of interviews

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George Bush is not watching the highly publicized series of television interviews with former President Richard Nixon.

"I'm sparing myself," he said half seriously. "I've already lived through the agony of Watergate. I don't want to live through it anymore."

Addressing the Press Club of Houston Forum at the Sheraton-Houston Hotel on Tuesday, Bush recalled some of his experiences as director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and chief of the U.S. liaison office in the People's Republic of China.

Bush called the CIA operation the best in the world. Americans must understand, he said, "that some things must be kept secret. What we need to do now is lay off official hand-wringing."

Bush said the agency has been attacked for everything from "hiding relics of Noah's ark to capturing two humanoids

and then letting them die. Well, we didn't do it."

He said he was forced to answer critics "with both hands tied" because of legal requirements to protect the sources and methods of the agency.

"I knew for certain many claims (against the agency) are untrue, but I wasn't able to set the record straight," Bush said.

He quit as CIA director when Jimmy Carter was elected to the presidency last November.

Bush, now living in Houston, is a member of the board of First International Bancshares, Inc. He also serves on the board of First International Bank and is chairman of the executive committee of the bank's board.

In other "random thoughts," Bush said China "was a fascinating experience. But it made me count my blessings as an American."

Particularly disturbing, he said, was the political indoctrination of small children.

"China is a poor country. But the people have a nationalism and pride that could prove to be a formidable force," he said.

Bush said he favored increased trade between the U.S. and China and discussed possible "normalization" in relations.

The advantage of full diplomatic relations, Bush said, include having an ambassador rather than a special envoy, improved protocol and "most importantly, locked-in stabilized" relations between the two countries.

He said he does not foresee improved relations between the Soviet Union and



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China, but was "more concerned about the Soviet threat to the U.S. than I have been for a long, long time."

"I don't think the Soviet Union has given up their political objective of gaining superiority over the U.S. The intelligence community has taken a look at the problem and everyone is worried."

Concerning his political ambitions, Bush said, "I'd like to keep my options open. I'll support (U.S. Sen. John) Tower. I will not run for governor, and I can't see that far down the road."